

REMARKS

Claim Status

Claims 1-21 are pending and have not yet been examined on the merits.

By this Amendment, Applicant has canceled claims 9 and 19 without prejudice or disclaimer and has added new independent claims 22 and 23. Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-18, 20 and 21 have been amended to depend from either claim 22 or 23. No new matter has been added by this Preliminary Amendment.

Entry of this amendment is requested prior to examination on the merits.

Information Disclosure Statement

Applicant also concurrently files herewith an Information Disclosure Statement and requests that the Examiner confirm his consideration of the 6 cited references by initialing and returning the PTO-1449 provided. English abstracts AA-DD have been provided for Japanese reference item numbers A-D, respectively. Reference item number 1 is a counterpart US Patent to Japanese reference item E.

Applicant submits that none of the cited references, individually or in combination, teaches or suggests at least writing the plurality of color components of image data for one line outputted from the image reading unit into the buffer memory, after that, during an image reading period of the image reading unit for a next line, reading out the plurality of color components of the image data for the one line from the buffer memory and performing a masking operation on the read out image data for the one line, as recited in independent claim apparatus claim 22 and method claim 23.

Accordingly, for at least the above stated reason, the present invention as recited in independent claims 22 and 23 and the dependent claims depending therefrom, as presented herein, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of, and therefore patentable over the submitted art taken alone or in any combination. Applicant submits that

the application is in condition for allowance which action is earnestly solicited.

In the event that a telephone conference would facilitate prosecution of the instant application in any way, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided.

AUTHORIZATION

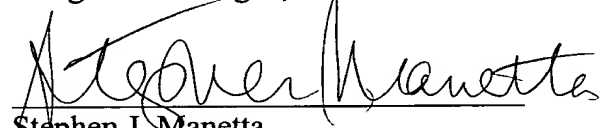
Applicant believes that no fees are necessary for the submission of this Preliminary Amendment, however, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for this paper or the accompanying IDS, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-4667. **A DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ENCLOSED.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: April 13, 2004

By


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